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EFFECTS OF CIVILISATION

ON THE

FORTUNES OF THE MEDICAL
PROFESSION.

An Address,

READ BEFORE THE MEDICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHAMPTON,
FEBRUARY 7TH, 1854,

BY

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THE Medical Society of Southampton are alone responsible for the publication of the following Address.

On the occasion of its being delivered, the members present, being themselves desirous to have it in a permanent form, and believing that others in the profession would derive from its perusal equal gratification to that which its delivery had given them, unanimously requested of their esteemed friend and colleague permission to make it public—a request with which Mr. Dayman kindly complied.

The Society feel persuaded that no apology will be deemed necessary for giving this address to the profession. On the contrary, they make no doubt

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but that many will thank them for putting within their reach views of important truths, which, if not original, are at least set forth in a fresh and striking light, as well as reflections on the position and duties of the medical profession, which are well fitted to make its members “wiser and better”, and to inspire them with a truer estimate than they often form of their high privilege as “fellow-workers with God himself in the diffusion of happiness to His creation.”

W. S. OKE, M.D.

President.

Southampton,

May 1854.

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MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN,

BEFORE entering on the main purport of the subject that is to occupy us to night, I have thought it advisable to bring before you the reasons which have induced us to adopt this kind of theme on the present occasion, as well as to give you a sketch of the general construction of my argument.

It must be fresh in the recollection of all who are now present, that subjects connected with the moral life of the medical profession have of late years occupied much of the public attention. The opening lectures of medical and other scientific institutions have uniformly breathed a spirit of earnest interest in the higher destinies of the profession; nor has the feeling that is abroad among us belied the endeavours of those who have sought to establish more just views of our social position.

In the autumn of last year, this subject was discussed in private by a few members of our Society, and it was then thought that, instead of devoting every one of our monthly meetings to debates on purely medical papers, an annual address might with advantage be read on some

ethial subject immediately affecting the profession. It now only remains for me to say that the beginning of our social year was deemed a proper season for such an address, and that the observations I have the honour of submitting to you this evening are the first feeble earnest of our new design.

With regard to the nature of the inquiry under consideration, my object has been throughout to compare the facts of general history with those of our art in particular, and to endeavour to form a just conception of the relative positions of society and the medical profession, by taking a comprehensive survey of the circumstances that have made them what they are. The most appropriate notions of individual things are, in the greater number of cases, communicated to the mind by those who, with the requisite faculties for observing, take up their position of observation external to the facts themselves: in questions, however, pertaining to the daily practice of medicine, our accurate abstractions can only be furnished by men who are themselves identified with the facts to be observed. The examination of our constitutional methods and principles, and their elucidation by forms of expression that are meant to be universally intelligible, must be developed from within.

One principal source of fallacy to those who watch our mysterious proceedings, arises from the circumstance that by far the greater part of our patients regard the business of medicine as an absolute and pure science; and although the application of the science ought, one would think, to teach them how much of art is mixed up with the practice, still the unseen principles to which we are always referring weigh down every other consideration, and the evidence of art becomes obscured by the perpetual intrusion of the speculative theory.

Medicine is perhaps the most delicate and refined of all arts in the hands of the educated practitioner. Each case may require to be referred to the original doctrines of science, and the great art then consists in applying the knowledge so obtained to the particular case in question ; the latter is seldom appreciated by the patient who, since he cannot comprehend the doctrine of the science, has no power to follow its application down into the province of art. He is aware that fundamental precepts must exist, but as they lie beyond the scope of his investigation, he is content to believe that the treatment he receives at the hands of his medical adviser is immediately worked out by the conclusions of science.

Whether, therefore, we are discoursing on an individual case, or endeavouring to penetrate into the secret springs of human action, as they interchangeably affect society and the profession of medicine, one thing appears certain, that the truth can only be fully appreciated, and therefore can only be made fully manifest by one who has known and felt the pressure of the circumstances that make up his every-day life.

The general propositions, however, which I have now to submit to your consideration will be best understood by portraying, as far as the time will allow, the two great facts themselves : on the one hand, the improvement of social ordinances, to which the term civilisation has been applied ; and on the other, the life of the medical profession, as it appears in its conditions of action and repose.

To determine whether there be such a thing as a social science has occupied the minds of many thinkers. Those who with easy and unscrupulous conceit have assumed the title of political prophets, have generally confined their speculations to one-sided and barren generalities, and have consequently too often misled their partizans ;

whilst, on the other hand, those who believe that Nature and her doings are only to be trusted when they can be made the subjects of a rigid induction by observation and experiment, have renounced the task of examining the phenomena of man in his relation to society, because they, trusting only in specific experiment, have imagined that all social phenomena are the result of the operation of complex causes, and therefore beyond the reach of the human understanding. It is comparatively within our own times that a class of men has sprung up capable of looking this question fairly in the face, and of rescuing in some measure an interesting branch of the science of human nature from vague empiricism and improbable conjecture.

The word "civilisation" is in every one's mouth, but there are perhaps few who have been at the pains to inquire whether they have ever formed in their own minds a definite or even tolerably exact idea of the meaning of the term. Still fewer who know, or care to know, whether this great matter of fact is governed by laws which are capable of being analysed or in any way demonstrated. Nevertheless such is the case, and it may fairly be said that the researches of modern historians have at last brought the minds of men up to a level with this great question.

It is not my intention now to penetrate into the inquiry of what civilisation is in reality, further than to show that both metaphysicians and historians of confessedly opposite creeds, agree in their general estimate of the process by which the onward movement of the elements of society is directed. Not that this comprehensive class is seen to be free from discord, when we come to weigh their separate views and to examine closely their opinions, but that the judgment of all sufficiently approaches one standard to justify our regarding the theory of every one as in-

cluded in a common system of psychological and moral laws.

Every change for the better—indeed it may be said, every essential change in the condition of society—has been invariably preceded by a change in the intellectual and moral convictions of its members; and this revolution appears by some means or other (though philosophers may disagree among themselves as to its precise nature) to be the key-stone of the law of progress. Thus, one distinguished writer says, “we are justified in concluding, that the order of human progression in all respects will be a corollary deducible from the order of progression in the intellectual convictions of mankind, that is, from the law of the successive transformations of religion and science. The question remaining, whether this law can be determined, at first from history, as an empirical law; then converted into a scientific theorem by deducing it, *à priori*, from the principles of human nature.”* The investigations which have led to this conclusion have also been pursued with the like result in France, and the theory of social dynamics considered to be referrible to derivative laws from real, though as yet undiscovered, principles. A more positive explanation of the powers which rule the destinies of mankind is to be found in the writings of those historians who have taken Christianity as the basis of their argument. In Frederic Schlegel, who was a member of the Church of Rome, we find “The Church catholic” assumed to be the lever by which society is, and is to be, regenerated: speaking, however, more broadly of Christianity as a great agent of civilisation, he says, “That in the progress of mankind, a divine hand and conducting providence are clearly discernible,

* Mills' Logic, vol. ii, p. 615.

that earthly and visible power has not alone cooperated in this progress, and in the opposition which has impeded it; but that the struggle has been in part carried on under divine and against invisible might, is a truth, which if not proved to mathematical evidence (an evidence here neither appropriate nor applicable), has still been substantiated on firm and solid grounds.”* On the other hand, M. Guizot, who is not enumbered with any fetters of church government, does not hesitate to define civilisation as “the progress of society and the progress of humanity”, and to connect them throughout his treatise with the universal development of Christianity.

“If we investigate history, properly so called”, says M. Guizot, “if we inquire into the nature of the great crises of civilisation, of those facts which, by universal confession, have given it a great impulse, we shall invariably recognise one or other of the two elements I have described. They are always crises of individual or social development, or facts which have wrought a change in the internal man, in his creeds or habits, or in his external condition, or his position in relation to his fellow mortals. For example, Christianity, not merely at its first introduction, but during the first ages of its existence, in no degree addressed itself to the social state; it proclaimed aloud that it did not interfere with it, it ordered the slave to obey his master, it attacked none of the great evils and iniquities of the society of that period. Who, however, will deny that Christianity, from the first, was a great crisis in civilisation? Why? Because it changed the internal man, the prevailing principles and sentiments; because it regenerated the moral and intellectual man.”†

Now, it may be well worth our while to inquire whether

* Phil. of Hist., p. 474.

† Civilis. in Europe, p. 31.

the fundamental laws upon which the real causes of civilisation depend are not themselves inseparable from the development of Christianity, in other words, whether the Christian scheme, in its fulness, is not at the root of the whole theory of civilisation ; but since every reasonable prediction of future events must be founded on our knowledge of the laws of succession, it concerns us in the first place to determine whether the principles of Christianity answer in every particular to the attributes of the indefeasible law we are in search of. To define, then, the essential characters of a law of causation, and to speak philosophically, we say that the cause of any phenomenon is the concurrent sum total of its invariable and unconditional antecedents, and we ought not to rest satisfied unless the analysis of the cause fulfils this rigorous definition ; let us see how far we are justified in asserting that the effects which we see manifested in civilisation are dependent on the original laws of Christianity ; at the same time premising that it is no part of our present undertaking to refute objections to the evidences of Christianity, since such objections, if in any way tenable against the declared truths of this revelation, are, as Bishop Butler has abundantly shown, *à fortiori* tenable against the scheme of nature and natural religion, and therefore against any other possible cause of the moral phenomena in question ; but whilst we assert our right to claim the Christian religion as a possible cause of social progress, we must not forget that Christianity itself, like other fundamental laws of action, must have many peculiar conditions of its own ; and as it is confessedly no business of the logician, whilst dealing with the proofs of cause and effect, to examine into the ultimate nature of “ things in themselves”, so it is no objection to the validity of the cause for which we are now contending that some of its

truths are beyond the scope of our comprehension. When, in common language, death is said to have been caused by a man's taking poison, the fact may be fully ascertained without attempting to penetrate into the original constitution of the conditions required to produce the result; in this, as in every other case, the order of succession, with its indispensable contingencies, is the limit of our necessary investigation.

The most direct method by which the truth of what is here asserted may be seen, is to examine at once the facts of general history; by the light of this inquiry we shall discover that civilisation has invariably followed the lamp of Christianity, in fact, that those moral states of society which it has been agreed upon all hands to call civilisation have always succeeded to the establishment of Christian principles, and, in truth, that they have never been found to endure under any other form of philosophy either intellectual or moral—nay, more, that the counteracting laws of an opposite agency have, so long as those laws were permitted to operate, exhibited the usual phenomena of physical obstructions. And perhaps no more conspicuous instance of the effects which followed the restoration of the original power can be found than in those which history reveals as the consequences of the Reformation. The general character of this social volcano has been variously stated; no one, however, appears to me so thoroughly to have sifted the facts as M. Guizot, and as his judgment and appreciation of the results of this great era peculiarly concern us as members of the medical profession, I have here laid the greater stress upon his words.

There can be no doubt that an imperative necessity existed in the minds of thoughtful and pious men for the enlargement of religious knowledge, but “There was a cause more powerful than this would imply, and which

risers superior to all the particular causes. It was a great explosion for the liberty of the human understanding, an uncontrollable demand for its free exercise of thought and judgment by its own powers alone, upon facts and ideas which Europe previously received, or was held bound to receive from the hands of authority. It was a grand undertaking for the enfranchisement of human thought, and, to call things by their proper names, a rebellion of the human understanding against power in spiritual matters.” *

Thus we may see that the return of unfettered Christianity affected the whole domain of intellect, and in so doing, for the time, far outstepped the legitimate boundaries of the civilising progress; but as the consideration of this important epoch brings me to the second part of my subject, which particularly concerns the profession of medicine, we must review this movement more in detail.

The absolute power which had been vested in, and then fettered by, monarchical and spiritual heads, burst its chains at the Reformation; and, after a struggle for independence, in which narrow-minded Puritans and unprincipled scholars took an active part, the standard of liberty was seized by the human understanding, which at once proceeded to remodel all things, and to proclaim itself omnipotent. The seventeenth century had witnessed the downfall of thrones that had usurped this power, and a similar spectacle was in store for the eighteenth century, for this also at its close was destined to see the overthrow of that absolute power which had corrupted the human reason, and had taught it to have an overweening confidence in itself. A truth of this nature cannot be stated too plainly nor set forth too prominently, since historians

* *Op. cit.*, p. 203.

of all kinds, Romish, Protestant, and infidel, have laid hands on these facts so often acknowledged to have been consequent on the Reformation, and have compelled them to support their case according to each one's peculiar prejudice, but the serious error into which each in his turn has fallen is this, that whilst the domineering spirit of the human mind is confessed by all to be the great characteristic mark of the eighteenth century; and so far as that era is concerned, its value or its evil held to be the pivot round which the joy and sorrow of the civilised world turned; not one that I am acquainted with has fairly shown that the good effects of a moral development, so gigantic as the Reformation, *could* not be felt until the first century had passed away. The advancement in science and art within the last thirty years, which our own eyes have witnessed, has been attributed by some to the long continuance of peace, which has always been supposed to favour the onward progress of human intelligence; by others it has been considered to be due to a gradual revival of the old religion among us; by others, again, to the more distinct diffusion of republican principles. Now the English people, who, beyond all others, have encouraged practical art, cannot be said to have been at peace whilst the very flower of their youth has been engaged in a protracted Indian war; neither can it be said that the arts have flourished in those countries where the old faith is the religion of the State; and although in America the enterprise of the people has kept pace with European knowledge, neither the genius nor the industry of the country can be said to have originated those ideas by which the principal improvements in science have been made.

No, I cannot but hold the great motive power of our own age, to derive its immediate force from the liberty of ungovernable thought which the Reformation set free.

The human reason ran mad in the first century succeeding to its great revolt, and proclaimed itself a god, but when the paroxysm subsided after the French revolution, then it was that the hand of the Divine Master began to direct the energies of man into the lawful channels of free inquiry, and, as a necessary consequence, the collateral auxiliaries of civilisation, such as the resources of art could supply, were cultivated with vigorous and healthy freedom by those who knew how to value the privileges of an intellectual gift, refined by the highest principles.

It may safely be averred that by far the greater share in the advancement of useful science and art in the present century belongs to men who have been eminent for their Christian zeal. I do not mean to say that *all* the discoveries in science are due to such men, but that the life of science, if I may so say, which is seen in its practical application, is mainly supported by a Christian fraternity.

Let us now see what medical science achieved in the last century, and how far its character was affected by the restless and inquisitive spirit of the times. There can be no doubt, that in this, as in every other age, the practisers of the art and mystery of medicine were among the first, from their natural sagacity and general education, to lay hold of the means, and to take possession of the field which the reformed organisation of the intellectual world had thrown open. The great doctrine of the circulation of the blood had been established, and the profession at large appeared satisfied as mere anatomy became more universally taught, with its own explanation of the laws of nature, forgetting altogether the patient investigation and philosophic modesty which had attended every step in the great induction, that led to the discovery of the circulation, and independently of this forgetfulness, there existed in the licentious literature of the times an elegant style and

winning diction of a character so fascinating as to carry by storm the hearts of the medical profession, whose members generally have never been celebrated for purity in composition or classical choice of language.

In the universal turmoil then of mind and matter which the Reformation let loose, medicine played a very important part. In this chaos were found the so-called free thinkers, materialists, and infidels, that infested our ranks at the close of the last and in the beginning of the present century. They claimed for themselves the interrogation of nature and the interpretation of the eternal constitution of things, puzzling themselves with a rickety smattering of the Baconian philosophy, and worrying their patients with an ambiguous and hard-mouthed phraseology: if in any age the memorable saying was applicable, it was in this, "*ubi tres medici ibi duo athei*"; yet in the midst of this the leaden age of medicine, two things strike us with awe, and force upon us a reverence for our profession, which the external circumstances of the period seem to forbid. Throughout the whole of this part of our career, history never lost sight of the fact, that the science of medicine was not born of human thought, there remained within an innate consciousness of its own greatness, and although it was degraded and subdued by false brethren, it could not be abolished; it knew what it had to do, and what it had to suffer, and while it submitted to the indignities inseparable from the defeat occasioned by the prevalence of evil principles, it could not become the object of ridicule, so great was the idea attached to its name, and so sacred the field of its operations; but the other thing to be noticed in connection with the period in question, is still more striking; it is the mysterious fact, that the blessings of health and success went hand in hand with actions that carried on their face the stamp of

infidelity ; the very men who in their daily conversation were denying the cardinal truths of revealed religion, were yet permitted to be the bearers of health and comfort to the afflicted. The unworthiness of the minister did not hinder the effect of the remedies he prescribed, and we accordingly find no more signal failures among those who practised our art at this than in any other era of our professional history.

We are, therefore, warranted in regarding the Reformation, not only as governing the law of progress at this time, and thereby advancing the best interests of civilisation by the emancipation of its moral powers, but as being a direct stimulus to the means that have carried forward the science of medicine, by developing the resources of free inquiry, and knocking off the chains that had linked the human mind for centuries to the dogmatic teaching of spiritual authority ; it remains now to be seen, how these two social facts, medical science and civilisation have acted and reacted one upon the other ; and here it must be borne in mind, that the fundamental cause of civilisation, when acting under the crisis of the sixteenth century, was in reality a regenerating cause, and not merely a reforming one. It has been asked, would the revolutionary spirit have been appeased by the redress of religious grievances on the part of the ecclesiastical spirit ? and the answer given is, that it would not have been satisfied with any concession of the kind, but “ that after demanding reform, it would have claimed liberty”. My own belief is, that a great cause of civilisation, such as Christianity, *cannot* be satisfied with a state of things which recognises absolute power under any form, the inherent constitution of Christianity being, that it makes itself part and parcel of the individual man : and that since it implants in him both a moral and intellectual law of liberty, the develop-

ment of civilisation must result from this personal law in the first place, however much it may be subsequently advanced by man in the aggregate. Now, if such is the case, all states of society, and therefore the medical profession, are both individually and collectively concerned in the dissemination of sound principles ; all carry within them the lamp of freedom, and all are alike answerable for the use they make of the light which is given them. The recognition of this equality then somewhat narrows the field of our present inquiry, by bringing both the agent and the thing acted on under the same responsibility, not that the task we have proposed to ourselves is lessened, but only the field of our investigation is simplified by a process which enables us to view civilisation on the one hand, and medicine on the other, as social movements having reciprocal duties.

I have here called these human phenomena social movements with reciprocal duties ; but it is far from my intention to assert that progress on both sides has marched on with equal steps. The profession of medicine, from the very nature of its tenets and the required order and vast sweep of its studies, must always be in advance of the masses of the people it has to treat ; and as a proof of the estimation in which medical men are universally held, I need only refer to the fact, that they are invariably appealed to when questions in natural philosophy arise. Yet is it not humiliating to our dignity to know and feel that there are too many among us, who, through forgetfulness of the very first principles of reasoning, have brought their minds down to the level of the careless and uninformed ? and that such men in the elucidation of mysterious facts are appealed to in vain ? This then is, perhaps, the commonest form under which society and the profession are presented to our every-day notice ; and as

the insensible steps which lead us down to this state are not generally recognised, I shall make no apology for entering somewhat fully into the causes that are constantly tending towards this result.

We begin the study of medicine as a scientific pursuit; our teachers presume that we are first acquainted with the fundamental canons of reasoning, and accordingly instruct us whilst we are within the pale of our exact sciences in accurate methods of induction, and when we get beyond it, as in our clinical training, we are directed to found our judgment on close and impartial observation. I therefore do not hesitate to say, that the systematic plan laid down and followed out in our principal medical schools is as perfect as it can be under present circumstances. We leave the schools, and are forthwith launched into the sea of practice; and then begins our temptation, and, if our moral constitution is sensitive, too often our bitter disappointment. The scientific practitioner discovers, perhaps at an early period of his career, that the public cannot understand, and therefore cannot appreciate his science; and it follows, as a consequence, that the scientific method insensibly yields to one more adapted to the understanding of the world, and hence comes our legalised empiricism, and what is called "routine practice", deplorable states that have resulted from the long continued pressure of the multitude of inferior minds upon the natural infirmities of an intellectual minority.

We here behold the profession brought face to face with society, and the latter outweighing the former by its palpable rewards for dishonesty; and now for the first time we have to consider the immediate bearing of our subject, and to deal with those phases of society which affect the *fortunes* of the medical profession. At the same time, what has been already said on the causes of civilisa-

tion in its best sense, has prepared our way for understanding that the support given to the really scientific practitioner will be in exact ratio with the moral and intellectual culture of the patient; but, alas! the past history of our profession shews a sad picture of an overbearing and ignorant world crushing, or endeavouring to crush, a struggling and noble body of men by a constant appeal to its necessities. Our poverty and not our will has over and over again consented to indignities that revolted our moral sense, and could never have been proposed under a higher condition of civilisation; so extensive has been this low tone of professional honour, that at one time an aptitude for commercial enterprise was deemed a proper ingredient in the medical student's character.

A brighter prospect is, I rejoice to say, now before us. We are opening upon a new page in our history, and, unless I am much deceived, the next twenty years will bring the principles of medicine so to bear on the social aspect of the world, that they will be justly regarded as in themselves powerful allies in the cause of civilisation; let us only glance at the character of the profession, as it is becoming daily more and more developed.

The practice of medicine is a liberal and comprehensive scheme of charity, and they who serve at this work are the almoners of faith, whose duty it is to offer comfort and hope in the hour of suffering. It is often said, that medical men are paid for their services. This is not true; they are paid for their time, if they are paid at all; for it would be, in a certain sense, of the nature of simony, to say that they are remunerated for the exercise of gifts which are not their own. Do not we all feel that we are bound to our most intimate patients by mysterious ties we can neither explain nor comprehend?

It was a conspicuous feature in the character of Sir Henry Hallford, that he had the power of inspiring hope in the minds of his patients, even in their last moments : we cannot interpret this faculty as a habit of representing to the sick man a false view of his case, for this able physician enjoyed the confidence of the best and most learned men of his age, and such an error in judgment would have been by them at once detected and shunned ; ought we not rather to regard it as an attribute of the refined understanding which, as if by instinct, made the physician welcome to the patient ? Many of us have known instances, in which it appeared, as if the moral sense were unequal to a full reception of the ghostly comforts transmitted by the pastor, until the spirit of the body had been refreshed by the visit of the physician. And how are we thus enabled to calm the energies which direct reflection, and as it were to propitiate the bodily temperament, unless it is by the working of a supernatural agency,—in short, by “ the divinity that stirs within us ” ?

Now the foregoing outline of the active principles of the medical profession would be very generally received as a candid and not overdrawn picture, and it might be expected that the members of such a profession would be represented as eminently Christian. I have endeavoured to show that England in the nineteenth century is beginning to reap the good fruits of the Reformation ; that moral qualities are prevailing over the natural ; and that the tendencies of mankind are towards a healthier tone of mind. I do not hesitate to say that in this improvement medical men have largely participated, and that they are every day becoming more worthy of their high calling ; but let us not deceive ourselves into the belief that our advancement will not bring with it many difficulties and temptations. After all, we are every one of us human, and

therefore prone to see our duty too often with careless and superficial eyes ; for instance, we are too apt to measure the success which attends the exercise of our skill by the amount of our pecuniary rewards, and to envy those who have amassed large fortunes, without stopping to inquire whether the beaten path to gain has always been the most honourable. Our every-day experience teaches us that avarice is a sin that clings to the most intellectual minds. The profound workings of science within the mind are no safeguard or antidote against this innate vice, and accordingly we find its weight too great for the better qualities even of some of our best men, and their methods of ordinary business gradually degenerating into the veriest "routine system". How, then, shall we avoid being misled into this broad and attractive way ; how prevent our being seduced by the immediate prospect of reward from the observance of right principles ?

I believe the only way is to acquire a habit of regarding ourselves as the stewards of a divine undertaking, and to make ourselves familiar with laws of action, for the operation of which we are not accountable to man ; if we are really the almoners of faith we can own but one Master, and to Him alone we are accountable for the deeds done in this His peculiar service. Let us only look at the daily life of a conscientious medical man, and we shall have no difficulty in recognising in him one of a fraternity whose conduct has elsewhere earned for them and their fellows the title of "a royal priesthood". In the performance of their ordinary duty they offer up themselves as a living sacrifice to Him whom they serve. Now observe, is this self-devotion universal among us ? Is it to be found as the mark of those who are the most successful ? Is it not rather that, like the priest of another order, the sacrifice is intended too often to propitiate the Deity towards him-

self? Nay, more, have not the temptations to pursue selfish ends a tendency to increase with the rising reputation and the acquisition of temporal honour?

If I were sent forth to find an example of scrupulous self-denial and zealous toil among the children of medicine, I should certainly seek him in the ranks of the Union surgeons. I should expect to discover him amidst the filth of a metropolitan attic or cellar; or making his way at midnight, drenched in rain, to the hovel on the barren heath. I should also, if I searched further, very likely find him to be an object of distrust, of frequent censure, perhaps of ridicule, to others whose calling should have led them to follow the daily steps of the doctor. And why is this? Simply because his life of hard work is a perpetual reproof to the indolent and self-righteous. I grant at once that such examples of patient and unselfish industry are to be found in every rank and state of medical life; my object in selecting the hard-worked union surgeon is, that in him, perhaps, we see *all* the conditions fulfilled that make up the character we are contemplating; for it is scarcely possible that the same amount of persecution should reach those members that move in the higher and more favoured walks of professional life.

I have thus endeavoured to sketch an outline of the laws that govern what is called civilisation, and to give a fainter sketch of the internal working of the medical profession. I have stated that both facts have received more or less an impetus from the great crisis of the Reformation, and that certain consequences have followed the fortunes of the profession in its general intercourse with the world. It remains now to be shown what hidden property it is in the facts themselves which has given life and reality to the action of society on the fortunes of medicine, and we shall perhaps see the matter more clearly by bringing a

familiar phase of medical existence before us in the way of illustration.

It is a favourite saying with many of our profession, that there is no accounting for the caprice of patients. Now this, if taken literally and according to the exact meaning of the words, is nothing more or less than a truism. The very essence of caprice being, that it is unaccountable. But if instead of the word caprice, we substitute what is often undeniable in the patient, namely, a tendency to change the medical adviser, I am of opinion, and shall endeavour to show, that there is nothing more easily and, I may add, more rationally to be accounted for.

The circumstances which govern the members of a community in their original choice of medical men to serve them, are too numerous and unimportant to be specified here. In London, and in other metropolitan cities, accident and the influence of friends are among the chief causes which determine the choice. In the remote villages there is frequently no alternative ; the squire must either employ the village doctor, or put himself to the inconvenience of sending many miles for advice.

I am now only concerned to show that the tendency to abandon one medical man for another, which is almost universal, and too often gives a sombre colouring to our daily practice, is founded in a deliberate, however erroneous, judgment of the patient ; and in this undertaking I must first insist, that no one who is without our pale is fully competent to decide whether the interpretation of our experience here given is the correct one or not. The foot that wears the shoe knows where it pinches, and in this department of our inquiry relating to certain dynamical laws of our constitution, the arbiters of truth must be gathered from among ourselves.

If we examine closely into this matter, I believe it will

be found that the value set upon professional skill is in exact ratio to the moral and intellectual culture of the patient. Not only are the more enlightened of mankind at pains to obtain the services of men who are endowed with habits of thought resembling their own ; but the less enlightened follow, perhaps unconsciously, the same rule, and are uneasy until they have found a medical adviser who shall give them back their own prejudices, corroborated by the sanction of apparent authority.

This, then, will be found in most instances to be the true key by which to unlock the mystery of that propensity for change we are now considering. In all cases it is sympathy that is sought ; by the educated and intelligent from congenial minds in our profession ; by the ignorant and vulgar from minds equally congenial ;—from those, in short, who have always at hand what their educated brethren are deficient in—the ready explanation of the inexplicable phenomena of disease, and an appropriate cure for the incurable. But let it be a consolation to the better men among us, that the honesty which confesses the power of medicine to be limited, and the skill which protects the patient from unnecessary interference, are not wasted on the thinking portion of mankind. The general progress of education is surely, though imperceptibly, enlarging the sphere in which the best principles can operate. We must not suffer our hearts therefore to fail at the instability of our patients ; they only obey a law which they cannot control, and are impelled by moral, intellectual, or interested motives, to seek the minds that satisfy these respectively.

We now see how the fortunes of the profession must be subject to the laws that govern the progressive substrata of society ; in proportion as wealth finds its way into the coffers of those persons whom we may emphatically call

“good men and true”, in that proportion will it be found sustaining the operations of the scientific portion of the medical community, and in advancing the interests of its best members. The innate constitution of the public mind compels it to yearn after a reciprocal attachment in an object so essential to its comfort and to the well-being of its domestic relations as the art of medicine, and until the first law of civilisation is more generally felt, we must be content to let the rewards for professional services flow on in the accustomed channels. The presence of a common tie which unites the doctor and his patient, whether for good or evil, will, in spite of the struggles and sublime aspirations of science, continue to govern the fortunes of the profession.

It may be quite true, that we cannot individually free ourselves from the oppression of the world, since it is more than probable that our dependent position rests on a foundation that is external to us; but although we cannot by ourselves emancipate our necessities from this inconvenient and degrading bondage, it does not follow that nothing can be done on our sides in support of those principles that we believe are the real causes of civilisation; it would be a fundamental error to suppose that the medical profession, though but a fragment among the existing elements of society, played no part in the great drama of human progress; let us in conclusion, then, see whether we are not designedly working at the grand change that is busy in the nineteenth century with the internal life of man, and whether our work is not already far advanced in the right direction.

We have seen what medicine is in its condition of action, it remains now to point out some of the peculiarities of its statical organisation, in order to demonstrate more clearly the manner in which it is influencing other contempo-

rancous states of civilisation. The medical profession holds within it the requisite conditions that tend to form and preserve all durable political bodies ; it has a system of education with its controlling discipline,—a feeling of allegiance to its form of government, and a strong spirit of union among its members, though the latter does often stand out in ludicrous relief against the little turbulent jealousies which personal collisions in practice occasion. We quarrel among ourselves and embroil our social economy in all kinds of internal dissension, but let anyone outside our community venture to impeach our character for nationality, and, one and all, we rise and turn upon him, as upon a common enemy. The offender meets with the same treatment as one that has inconsiderately interfered to calm the mutual animosities of man and wife.

A constant reaction of effects upon their immediate causes is going on almost imperceptibly among the successive phenomena of social events, so that the circumstances resulting from antecedent states of human nature, as it were, turn round and direct the forces by which the social position of mankind is again determined, and these phenomena can perhaps nowhere be better studied than in tracing the history of changes that are even now occurring among the general facts of society and medical practice. It may be said, that a natural correlation must exist among the elements of these states ; at the same time it may be both instructive and encouraging to show the process by which medicine helps to mould the loftiest pretensions of progressive civilisation.

The great difficulty with many students of political philosophy has been, that whilst they recognised the existence of fixed laws, to which the progress of society must conform, they regarded the effects of these laws as both innumerable and for ever changing, so that supposing it

possible to calculate even the laws themselves, the data to which they could be applied would be beyond the reach of the human understanding; accordingly, without giving up the object of establishing a social science altogether, they rest contented with an amount of knowledge sufficient for every day guidance, although unequal to the task of predicting the history of society.

There is a body, however, of independent thinkers to whom such a difficulty in investigating the causes of civilisation never presents itself, and whom the latitudinarian philosophers I have just mentioned would probably class with those who “frame universal precepts, instead of attempting to ascertain universal sequences.” Now, as I profess myself to belong to this body of men, I shall endeavour to show, that the “universal precepts” being already framed for us, we have no difficulty in ascertaining the “universal sequences.” Those who believe in Christianity are possessed of a light by which they at once discover, not only the fundamental law of human civilisation, but the general result of the operation of that law under all conceivable circumstances; they *have* that knowledge which enables them to predict the history and to calculate the perturbations of society, as certainly as the events in astronomy can be foretold. They too, like the latitudinarians, believe “that there are limits to the power of the human will over the phenomena of society, and that many social arrangements are impracticable from their incompatibility with the properties of the subject matter”; but unlike the latitudinarians, they have the means of analysing this incompatibility in the case of civilisation. They know that permanent boundaries are set to the power of the human will by the interference of the original law; for an acquaintance with the conditions of that law enables them to declare not only that the human

will whilst under the dominion of that law can act only in one way, but that the human will in its dealings with all other apparent sources of civilisation carries with it the elements of uncertainty and confusion.

This examination, then, of the laws of the phenomena we are considering, will, I hope, open our eyes to the position of medicine as a divine institution among the circumstances of civilisation. Whilst we remain within the pale of progressive improvement our will must conform to that law which is both the first cause and the constant support of our social life; the law of Christianity acts upon us individually and in combination with our fellows through the medium of general society, and we in turn render back with interest the talent that is committed to us. The formation of special societies and extensive associations, founded on right principles, among us, is an evidence that we acknowledge the operation of the great law of our moral being, as it appears in the constitution of a Christian community; whilst on the other hand, the recognition, by the better portion of the public, of sanitary reform, and the amelioration of the physical health of all classes, as mighty engines towards establishing a sounder code of morality in the human mind, are in themselves a proof that society feels and obeys the reaction of the divine law through the medium of the medical profession.

The essential theory of the subject upon which my general proposition rests its foundation, is this, that there is an active principle of mutual agreement between medical men and their patients, which may easily be traced to an inherent similarity in their habits and tastes, and that consequently, the fortunes of the profession will be found on the track of the best men amongst us in proportion as the best spirit shall animate the external social world.

The more extensive diffusion of wisdom has no doubt a

tendency to equalize the measure of this world's goods within our ranks ; further than this we have no right to expect : but as the public look upon us as servants to whom certain wages are due, and since it is confessedly expedient for the sake of public good to keep up an expensive and liberal education in the profession of medicine, we need be under no fear that society will attempt to lower the wages of its indispensable attendants ; at the same time, whilst we feel that mankind have a right to our services, and to pay us according to their estimate of our work, let us not forget that our covenant is not with man. However mean our temporal estate may be, however much we may covet honour, and repine at the absence of titles and distinctions among us, it may content us to remember, that the condition of our Master was far more abased than ours.